

## What is a huff cough?

A huff cough is a type of cough that is a gentler way to bring up mucus. The technique is much like what you would do to fog up a mirror or window. It is also known as a forced expiratory technique.

## How do I do a huff cough?

Follow your doctor or respiratory therapist's instructions for how to do a huff cough. Some guidelines include:

- Sit up straight with your chin tilted slightly up and your mouth open.
- Take in a slow, deep breath, and hold it for 3 to 5 seconds.
- Breathe out forcefully with your mouth open.
  - **You should not hear a scraping or wheezing sound when you breathe out.**
  - It should be more like a forced sigh.
- Repeat this 2 more times.
- Follow with 1 or more regular coughs to clear mucus from your larger airways.
- This ends 1 set of huff coughs.

Do 3 sets of huff coughs:

- After each frequency setting during vest treatments.
- After each position of percussion and postural drainage (CPT).
- After each cycle of oscillating PEP therapy.

You can also do a huff cough anytime you feel the need to cough and clear your lungs.

### For small children:

- Have them make chicken wings with their arms and bring the “wings” down against their chest while saying the word “huff”, **or**
- With an open mouth, have the child fog a mirror, **or**
- Put a cotton ball on your hand or a table. Then, have your child blow the cotton ball off your hand or table with an open mouth.

## Why do I need to hold my breath for 3 to 5 seconds?

When you hold your breath, it allows time for air to build up behind the mucus. This build-up helps force the mucus out of the airway. It also allows any part of the airway that has collapsed to re-inflate.

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**

# Huff cough, continued

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## What if I have questions?

Talk with your pulmonologist (lung doctor) or respiratory therapist if you have any questions or concerns.

## When should I call the doctor?

Call 911 right away if you have trouble breathing.

Also call your doctor if you have any questions or concerns about how you feel.

**This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.**

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**